The Church of Scotland

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Opportunity and Challenge for the Church: Resource plan

Session 1 - What is Artificial Intelligence?

Learning outcome: A basic understanding of what AI is and exploration of how it affects different aspects of our lives including our faith.

Summary paragraph: A broad definition of AI is when machines perform tasks which, in the past, only people could do. Algorithms are the sets of mathematical operations that enable a computer to perform these tasks. These can include the rapid analysis of huge data sets and the operation of robots, autonomous cars and drones.
AI is used in business and government administration, including the assessment of social security, employment and loan applications. AI algorithms also underpin some impressive innovations in healthcare, assisting doctors to diagnose illness, discover new drugs, read medical images and use robots in surgical operations.

Video: Session 1 - What is AI?
Bible passage: Proverbs 1:1-7

Discussion questions:

1. What technologies do you know that use AI and how do you feel about them? E.g. driverless cars, chatbots, robotic medical operations and the use of algorithms to analyse big data in ways that affect us daily e.g. weather forecasting, operating vaccine passports and the security cameras on our streets.
2. How aware are you of how social media platforms, phone voice recognition assistants and smart TVs function, and use your data for targeted advertising? E.g. Facebook, Siri on your phone, or Amazon Alexa in the home.
3. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of AI technology?
4. Should we be fearful that runaway technology will move beyond human control?
5. How does increasing reliance on technology and AI implementations affect who we are as relational human beings, made in the image of God? Is there a place for AI in church?

Prayer:

God of all creation,
we give thanks for the world around us
and for the extraordinary gift of intelligence
that allows us to understand and grow in wisdom
as we learn more.
We recognise that this gift
has brought us to the point of creating artificial intelligence
and we pray that you would help us
wisely to use these innovative technologies
to bring benefit to the entire world.
Open us up to understand the blessings
and the challenges that AI brings.
Amen.